

Dr. Isaac Roberts.

The *facile princeps* of English astronomical photographers has been suddenly removed from amongst us; and it is with the deepest regret that we announce the death of Dr. Isaac Roberts, of Crowborough, on Sunday, 17th of July, only five days after he had attended the funeral of our first President, the lamented

Capt. Noble. Isaac Roberts was born in Denbighshire in the year 1829, and early developed a taste for physical science. His first publication, however, was a paper on the wells and water of Liverpool, which appeared in 1869, and in the following year he was elected a Fellow of the Geological Society. This paper was succeeded by others on kindred subjects, amongst which may be mentioned two in 1883, one "On the Influences of the Sun and Moon on the Level of Underground Water," contributed to Symons's "Meteorological Magazine," and another "On the Attractive Influence of the Sun and Moon in causing Tides, and the Variations in Atmospheric Pressure and Rainfall, causing Oscillations in the Underground Waters in Porous Strata," which appears in the British Association Report for that year. Subsequently he turned his principal attention to astronomy, and established an observatory at Maghull, about seven miles to the north of Liverpool. It was here that he commenced those labours in stellar photography which have made his name famous, and in which his productions are far too numerous for detailed reference here. He had formed the gigantic scheme of photographing the whole northern heavens, but when, at the instance of the late Admiral Mouchez and Sir David Gill, this was undertaken for both hemispheres by the international co-operation of several observatories, Dr. Roberts devoted his special attention to star clusters and nebulae, and a magnificent volume, containing a selection of these, appeared in 1893. But before that, having found by experience that the atmosphere in the neighbourhood of Liverpool was by no means suitable for delicate astronomical observations, he, after much consideration and personal examination of various sites, both at home and abroad, selected, in 1890, a position on Crowborough Hill, Sussex, about seven miles south-west of Tunbridge Wells, and more than 800 feet above the level of the sea, close to the spot where the late Mr. Prince had been working as an amateur at astronomy and meteorology. Here Dr. Roberts spared no expense to provide his observatory, which he named "Starfield," with the appliances best adapted to his purpose, and here for the last 12 years (assisted during a great part of the time by Mr. W. S. Franks, F.R.A.S.), he carried on that splendid series of astronomical photographs which have so largely aided in the recent extension of our knowledge of the constitution of the heavens. Many of us have had personal experience of how kindly several of these were placed at the disposal of those to whom they would be likely to be useful; and reproductions of others have often appeared, with descriptions of special features, in various numbers of that well-known scientific periodical, "Knowledge." The Royal Astronomical Society (of which he had been a Fellow since 1882) awarded him its Gold Medal in 1895. The Royal Society elected him to its Fellowship in 1892, the same year in which the degree of Doctor of Science was conferred upon him by the University of Dublin. He was an original Member of the British Astronomical Association, and had served on its Council. During the last three years he had the valuable co-operation of his second wife, who had already become known in the astronomical world under her maiden name of Klumpke.